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Contact: Andrew Prazuch
andrewp@kcba.org
206-267-7061
www.kcba.org



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Bar Group Finds Charles' Statements Violate Judicial Campaign Conduct Rules

SEATTLE, Washington (October 27, 2010) - The King County Bar Association has found that statements made by Seattle Municipal Court Judge Edsonya Charles in her campaign for re-election violate the bar association's rules for fair campaign practices.

"Judge Charles' media publications and public statements give misleading impressions about her opponent that are in violation of the bar's rules for judicial campaign conduct," said Andrew Prazuch, KCBA Executive Director. "We believe Judge Charles' statements, including statements by her campaign organization, that her opponent is improperly affiliated with, and if elected, would be beholden to, the DUI defense bar and related organizations, inappropriately create the impression that justice can be bought and call into question the integrity and impartiality of the judiciary. We also concluded that her statement that she is a better candidate due to her tough stance on drunk driving is improper."

KCBA issued this finding after receiving a public complaint about the statements on October 12. The bar acted quickly on the complaint due to the imminent November 2 general election.

Because preserving the integrity of judicial offices is vital if public respect for the law and the courts is to be preserved, the bar monitors judicial elections that take place in whole or in part in King County, and responds to complaints of unfair judicial campaign practices in those elections. The bar asks candidates to sign a pledge to fairly campaign so that contests for judicial office do not impair public confidence in the integrity and objectivity of the judicial process. Unfair or potentially deceptive campaign conduct by judicial candidates can undermine public confidence in the courts unless the public is certain that such conduct will not be tolerated.

Founded in 1886, the King County Bar Association is the largest voluntary bar association in the state of Washington, with over 5,400 members. As part of its mission it works with the judiciary to promote a just, collegial, and accessible legal system and profession, and to achieve excellence in the administration of justice.

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